

**OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE**  
**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C.**  
**20508**

---

USTR PRESS RELEASES ARE AVAILABLE ON THE USTR WEBSITE AT [WWW.USTR.GOV](http://WWW.USTR.GOV)

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**AUGUST 4, 2003**

**2003-51**  
**CONTACT: RICH MILLS/RICARDO REYES**  
**(202) 395-3230**

**USTR Notifies Congress of Intent to Initiate Free  
Trade Talks with the Dominican Republic**

WASHINGTON - United States Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick today formally notified Congress of the Administration's intent to initiate negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) with the largest economy in the Caribbean, the Dominican Republic. The Administration will seek to integrate the Dominican Republic into the FTA being negotiated between the United States and five nations in Central America. The Administration could then send Congress one agreement including the six countries.

"An FTA with the Dominican Republic will foster economic growth and create higher paying jobs in the United States by further reducing and eliminating barriers to trade and investment between the Dominican Republic and the United States. The Dominican Republic's relatively open trade and investment regime, augmented by recent fiscal reforms, has made it one of the world's fastest growing economies over the last decade and an economic engine in the Caribbean Basin," wrote Zoellick in the letter to Congressional leaders.

The Dominican Republic also enjoys strong trade and business ties with Puerto Rico, which will be enhanced by the FTA. "Adding the Dominican Republic as an FTA partner will promote economic growth and further integration in the Caribbean by building on a successful agreement with Central America and by lending further momentum to concluding the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations by January 2005," Zoellick also wrote.

Provisions in the Trade Act of 2002, which granted Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), require the Administration to consult with and notify Congress regarding free trade negotiations. Zoellick has been consulting with Congress throughout this year on ways to expand bilateral trade ties between the United States and the Dominican Republic, including on July 24, 2003, when he met with the Congressional Oversight Group (COG). Zoellick also notified Congress today of the intent to begin FTA talks with Bahrain next year.

"It has been almost one year since the President secured Trade Promotion Authority from the Congress so as to get the tools to open markets with FTAs and negotiations in the WTO and Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Last week, Congress completed favorable action on our two new FTAs with Singapore and Chile. We are in the midst of negotiations on FTAs with Morocco, Australia, five nations in Central America, and five nations in southern Africa," said Zoellick today regarding the notification. "Today, the Administration is building on this momentum by announcing our intent to start free trade talks with the Dominican Republic and

Bahrain.”

Since 1985, the Dominican Republic has enjoyed preferential access to the U.S. market through the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI). Zoellick noted in the letter that consultations with Congress regarding the Dominican Republic have been positive, and that the trade talks will build on the direction provided by Congress in CBI.

According to a recent Cato Institute Paper by Dan Griswold, the markets opened through the recently completed Chile and Singapore FTAs, the ongoing Morocco, Central America (CAFTA), South African Customs Union (SACU), and Australia FTA negotiations, and the proposed Bahrain FTA negotiations, taken together as a group would constitute the 4th largest U.S. export market and the world’s 9th largest economy in terms of purchasing power. The Cato paper did not include the Dominican Republic, but the markets of the Dominican Republic and Central America would create the second largest U.S. trading partner in Latin America.

In early 2001, the United States began to pursue a strategy of promoting trade liberalization globally, regionally and bilaterally. The United States helped launch the ongoing World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations, called the Doha Development Agenda, and has put forward bold proposals in agriculture, services and goods to spur the talks forward. Along with its co-Chair Brazil, the United States is leading the effort to complete the Free Trade Area of the Americas on schedule, and is hosting the next FTAA Ministerial in Miami.

A copy of the letters to Congress and a fact sheet on trade and the Dominican Republic are available at: [www.ustr.gov](http://www.ustr.gov).

# # #